



Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO)

Update on Progress in the Former Soviet Union and Central Europe as of April 14, 2010

Work of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs

- The United States and Russia exchanged diplomatic notes in Moscow on July 6, 2009, restoring our joint, presidential commission. The U.S. side hopes this restored relationship will reverse a sharp decline in the level of activity on POW/MIA issues by the Russian side in recent years.
- The diplomatic notes:
 - formally re-establish the commission and subordinate it directly to the Presidents of the United States and the Russian Federation;
 - set out the commission's objectives, including collection and analysis of materials, organization of investigations, provision of mutual assistance, coordination of efforts, and public dissemination of information;
 - describe the organizational structure of the commission;
 - set forth the commission's working methodology, and;
 - designate the Russian and U.S. staff agencies that will support the commission, namely DPMO's Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD) on the U.S. side, and an analogous Russian staff element within the Ministry of Defense, on the Russian side.
- After the Russians have appointed their co-chairman (the previous appointee died in December 2008), the U.S. side will seek a renewal of full cooperation.
- In January 2010, the Russian Government restored JCSD's access to the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense in Podolsk, Russia - the largest military archive in Europe. Important research on at least the Korean War and World War II has resumed there on a routine basis.

Efforts Relating to World War Two

- In the past, JCSD WWII analysts have sought information on U.S. losses by interviewing witnesses, conducting site visits, and performing archival research in Russia, the former USSR, and the states of Central Europe. Today our work focuses on U.S. losses within the territory of the Russian Federation and the other 14 states of the former Soviet Union, as well as assisting the Russians in determining the fates of their missing service members.
- Research conducted by the commission led to a 2002 recovery from a WWII crash site in eastern Russia, accounting for the seven-member crew of a U.S. Navy PV-1 aircraft lost in 1944.
- In 2002, JCSD discovered a grave site in Hungary where the remains of a U.S. airman were believed to be commingled with the remains of Soviet soldiers. A trilateral agreement between the U.S., Hungary, and the Russia recently authorized exhumation of the grave for forensic analysis.
- JCSD's field research and investigation in Croatia in 2006 resulted in the discovery of a WWII-era grave and the recovery and identification of the remains of a missing U.S. airman.
- In August 2007, a JCSD team conducted the first U.S. investigations since WWII in the former East German states of Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Brandenburg, and Berlin. The team met with archivists, historians, government officials, and private citizens in an attempt to clarify the fates of

service members still missing in the former East Germany. The team discovered new sources of relevant information, and the Germans turned over documents on specific cases.

- JCSD's analysis of recently obtained Bulgarian archival documents, together with a 2008 and 2009 field investigation there, correlated a 10-man bomber crew loss to a crash site in Bulgaria. This crew was previously thought to have been lost in Romania.
- In June 2008, JCSD conducted the first U.S. field investigation in Albania since just after the end of WWII. The work pertained to two aircraft loss incidents with unaccounted-for crews.
- Recent JCSD research in Poland (2009) and Lithuania (2006) developed new leads on the loss of 10 missing airmen; these cases have been referred to JPAC for further investigation.
- In September 2009, JCSD sent a team of investigators to the Czech Republic to conduct field investigations on 11 missing airmen. Like our work in Albania, these were the first such investigations since just after the end of WWII.
- With access restored to the Central Archives in Podolsk, Russia, JCSD investigators can once again review vast numbers of documents from Soviet WWII units, as well as captured German documents. These records contain critical information about downed U.S. aircraft, the medical treatment of Allied personnel, POW camp records, and repatriation-related documents.

Efforts Relating to the Vietnam War

- Recent progress has been made in Ukraine. After years of effort, DPMO analysts managed to convince the Defense Ministry to declassify 28 collections (10,000 pages) from the Vietnam War era, and these files were reviewed during a recent 39-day TDY there. DPMO continues to press for access to still more Vietnam War-era files, including those of the Ukrainian security services.
- In 2008-2009, JCSD won direct access to the training manuals held at the University of the Ukrainian Air Force in Kharkov. The manuals contain narrative descriptions of aerial battles in North Vietnam during the war. JCSD obtained copies of 20 Vietnam War-era Soviet air-to-air combat schematics from these manuals.
- With the activities of our joint commission suspended for the past five years, we have worked unilaterally to locate and interview Soviet veterans of the Vietnam War. Since July 2008, we have interviewed about 40 Vietnam War veterans in multiple cities across Russia and Ukraine.
- Besides work in Ukraine and Russia, the Vietnam War group is creating and populating databases that will help analysts store and rapidly retrieve 17 years' worth of information collected by the commission on Soviet involvement in the Vietnam War.
- In the more distant past, the Russian side has provided us a total of 356 declassified excerpts from the Central Archives containing sketchy shoot down information from the Vietnam War. The U.S. side analyzed these materials and followed up with requests for more information but has received no response to date from the Russians. These efforts will resume when the commission re-starts its activities.
- JCSD continues to cultivate contacts with Russian and Ukrainian veterans' organizations. One Russian and one Ukrainian veterans' groups have been very helpful locating veterans and arranging interviews.
- In April 2009, the Ukrainian General Staff provided a list of 300 Korean and Vietnam War veterans currently residing in Ukraine. The General Staff acquired their consent to be interviewed by JCSD.

Efforts Relating to the Cold War

- The Commission continues to investigate and survey the last known locations of 77 American air crew servicemen lost in or near Soviet territory during the Cold War between 1950 and 1965.
- JCSD investigators traveled to Murmansk in the fall of 2006 and 2007 in search of clues to the fates of the three American crewmen lost in the region in 1960 and met with local veterans' organizations and governmental and archival institutions. They also investigated four civilian cemeteries near Murmansk and a military cemetery near Severomorsk, attempting to locate the burial site of one of the air crewmen lost in 1960.
- In September 2007, JCSD investigators navigated difficult terrain northeast of Vladivostok to survey a crash site of a possibly American-made aircraft. At the Historical Museum of the Russian Pacific Fleet in Vladivostok, they presented documents and a film to representatives of the Pacific Fleet and Soviet/Russian veterans' groups that shed light on the fates of Soviet seamen lost on the Soviet submarine K-129, which sank in the Pacific in March 1968.
- In April 2008, JCSD investigators traveled to Riga and Liepaja, Latvia, where they investigated the U.S. Navy PB4Y2 aircraft shot down over the Baltic Sea on 8 April 1950. This investigation continued in Latvia and Lithuania in August 2009.
- Since 1997, our contracted Russian researcher, Rear Admiral (ret.) Boris Novyy, has been working in the Central Archives of the Russian Navy in Gatchina, near St Petersburg, in the Border Guards Archives in Pushkino, near Moscow, and in local archives in Murmansk. It is hoped that restoration of the commission in July 2009 will result in Novyy's archival access being expanded.
- The Cold War group continues to assist the Russians in accounting for Soviet soldiers missing from the 1979-89 war in Afghanistan and in investigating the issue of American citizens who went missing in the former Soviet Union during the Cold War, particularly the investigation of accounts of Americans sighted in the Stalinist-era GULag prison camp system and the Soviet correctional labor colony system for political prisoners that succeeded the GULag.

Efforts Relating to the Korean War

- This group has discovered Soviet-era documents detailing combat activities during the Korean War in China and in South Korea. This is an important source of archival materials, and the Korean War group has obtained over 500 documents from China and dozens of documents from the Republic of Korea (ROK) so far. It is exploring additional avenues to acquire new Russian-language documents from the ROK Defense Ministry as they become available.
- From August 1997 to October 2006, the U.S. had routine, direct access to the Central Archives of the Russian Ministry of Defense at Podolsk, Russia, for research in unclassified files from the Korean War era. Since the establishment of the Commission in 1992, DPMO has collected over 52,000 pages of materials relating to U.S. losses in the Korean War. To date, 332 cases involving missing American servicemen have been clarified to varying degrees thanks largely to this archival access, which was suspended by the Russians in October 2006 pending a restoration of the Russian side of the Joint Commission. With the commission restored, JCSD was once again allowed access to the Central Archives in Podolsk in January 2010. This group will work to obtain direct access to additional Russian archives.
- Researchers have interviewed over 1,000 Soviet veterans of the Korean War since the Commission began its work in the former USSR. These interviews have provided valuable information about Soviet involvement in the war and, in some cases, information on unaccounted-for Americans. From this and other source materials, the commission concluded that there is a high probability that American POWs from the Korean War were transferred to the former USSR.